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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 13TH COMBAT AVIATION (DELTA) BATTALION
APO San Francisco

AVBA-DB-3

15 February 1967

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 31 January
1967 (RCS CSG PO-28CR1)

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SECTION I

SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZATION OR UNIT ACTIVITIES

1. ORGANIZATION: During the reporting period the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion included:

a. Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment with the 5th, 52nd, 53rd and 62nd Quartermaster Detachments and the 13th Security Platoon attached.

b. 336th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) with the 167th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 277th Signal Detachment (Avionics) and the 41st Medical Detachment attached.

c. 121st Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) with the 80th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 257th Signal Detachment (Avionics), 69th Infantry Detachment (Ground Surveillance Radar) and the 78th Artillery Detachment (Counter-mortar Radar) attached.

d. 114th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) with the 544th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 96th Signal Detachment (Avionics), and the 83rd Medical Detachment attached.

e. 175th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) with the 150th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 28th Signal Detachment (Avionics) attached.

f. 221st Reconnaissance Airplane Company (O-1) with the 325th Signal Detachment (Avionics) attached.

2. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES: The MTOE 1-77G was approved in theater. This modification changed the structure of the UH-1 Companies from eight aircraft per lift platoon to eleven, providing an overall increase of lift capability to 22 troop transports per company. One additional UH-1 was added to provide a command and control aircraft. In-theater float aircraft have been utilized to provide the additional vehicles. Personnel augmentation packets began arriving in November. The personnel augmentation was completed in early December.

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On 5 November the Headquarters of this Battalion moved from downtown Can Tho to its new facility at the Can Tho Airfield Installation. This released an administration building back to the ARVN IV Corps Headquarters and enabled battalion headquarters to be housed under one roof. Many advantages accrued from this move. Staff sections were able to effect immediate coordination with each other. Assigned units saved much time in conducting their normal business. The high demand on organic transportation was relieved as headquarters is now within walking distance of the airstrip.

On 4 January, the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment was relocated from a leased hotel in the city of Can Tho to the Can Tho Airfield Installation. This move allowed a 70 room hotel to be returned to the IV Corps billeting officer to alleviate housing problems for Air Force personnel. Problem areas of unit security, personnel control and transportation were greatly alleviated by this move.

On 3 January 1967 issue of UH-1C's to the two armed platoons of the 114th Assault Helicopter Company was completed. The limited life of the sleeve bearings in the main rotor blade grips is a continuing problem. Reseating the carbon seals to minimum clearance has extended the service life of the sleeve bearings from about 30 hours to about 200 hours. The deflection kits have now been installed, but, have not been in use long enough to evaluate their effectiveness.

In late November one of the armed platoons of the 114th Assault Helicopter Company was equipped with XM-21 (Minigun) armament subsystems. No significant problems have been encountered.

3. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AVIATION SUPPORT:

a. The Delta Combat Aviation Battalion assigned and attached units continue to provide operational and administrative support to the ARVN IV Corps, Special Forces and USAID. These missions include command liaison, outpost resupply, medical evacuation, radio relay, escort and visual surveillance. Statistics generated in support of all assigned missions are as follows:

	November	December	January	Total
Hours flown	12,678	13,861	13,050	39,589
Sorties	19,507	20,552	22,791	62,850
Passengers moved	44,770	56,150	60,932	161,852
Cargo Tons moved	805	497	401	1,703

b. Cargo Tons moved showed a significant decrease with the departure of the 134th Airplane Company (CV-2).

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4. TACTICAL AVIATION SUPPORT:

a. Tactical support was rendered to ARVN IV Corps, its subordinate units, Special Forces and reinforcement of II FFV and I FFV. Support during this period included airlanded assaults, aerial direct fire support, eagle flights, reconnaissance and surveillance of the battle area, leaflet dissemination, armed escort, aeromedical evacuation, canal curfew enforcement (Fire Fly), and dispensation of riot control agents. Statistics generated in support of these missions as follows:

	November	December	January	Total
Heliborne Assault Missions	23	26	26	75
Hours flown	4,094.4	4,966.4	5,250.2	14,311
Sorties	6,575	8,698	9,004	24,277
Troops moved	26,892	40,040	41,656	108,588
Fire Fly missions flown	35	33	22	90
VC Killed By Army Aviation	452	353	411	1,216
VC Sampans destroyed	416	135	135	686
VC Structures destroyed	235	137	123	495

b. Aviator flight time remained close to that of the last period. Average monthly flight time this period was 103.9. The last previous reporting period was 103.4 hours. An increase of aircraft and pilots has served to keep this figure at a reasonable level.

c. Significant Operations Conducted During This Period.

(1) Cuu Long 62/Kien Hoa 19 November 1966. On this date, Delta Battalion staged at Ben Tre in the 7th (ARVN) Infantry Division area to support a search and destroy operation. The operation was conducted in Kien Hoa sector with maneuvering forces consisting of four Regional Force Companies. Aviation resources included 16 armed transports, 1½ armed platoons, and two command and control helicopters. Air mobile troops were airlanded into two LZ's with no enemy contact reported. Approximately two hours later an outpost near the Ba Tri district town (14 kilometers south of the operation in progress) came under attack by an estimated Viet Cong Battalion. One command and control helicopter and one heavy fire team were immediately dispatched to the area. As this small force arrived in the area of the outpost, approximately 300 VC were sighted fleeing to the south east. The armed team immediately took the enemy under fire. Although all three ships suffered extensive combat damage, they remained until all ordnance had been expended. A search

of the area by friendly forces turned up a body count of 61 VC killed by armed ships. Intelligence reports, later received, estimated a total of 147 enemy killed in the encounter. This operation points out the particular effectiveness of armed helicopters in their ability to respond to changing tactical situations and to provide security and fire support for Delta installations.

(2) Long Phi 998, 8-12 January 1967. This five day operation was generated to conduct a search and destroy operation along the major portions of the Long Toan VC Base area.

Significant from an aviation stand point was the Army Aerial Intelligence Collection Effort and the large numbers of troops transported by helicopter. A comprehensive collection effort was initiated in early December by the S-2 of this aviation battalion. Utilizing the 221st Reconnaissance Airplane Company (O-1), target data was collected and an analysis completed. Information from the Battalion Spot Report System was documented and passed immediately to the G-2 Advisor of IV Corps. Photographic missions were flown by the battalion staff which resulted in clear photos of all available landing zones.

The 13th Combat Aviation Battalion staged from Tra Vinh at 0650 hours on 8 January. The first day's aviation support was comprised of forty armed transports, four armed platoons and two command and control aircraft. Eight lifts transported 1,180 troops into three LZ's in one hour and twenty seven minutes. By 1030 hours a total of 1,370 troops had been airlanded. Four extractions were flown later in the day for a day's total of 1,700 troops carried. The first day's results were 14 VC KBAA and 16 sampans destroyed. Ground troops reported negative results. On 9 January, Delta Battalion supported with sixty four aircraft to include 38 armed transports, four armed platoons and two C & C aircraft. Staging from Tra Vinh at 0730 hours, a total of 1,586 troops were repositioned from the previous day's objectives into four LZ's in four hours and five minutes. An additional lift was made at 1700 hours to reinforce a battalion position, bringing the day's total troops carried to 1,776. Armed platoons claimed eight VC KBAA, 19 structures and five sampans destroyed. Although heavy ground fire was received in one LZ, suppressive escort fire minimized the damage to the transports. Eight aircraft received hits this day and three crewmembers were wounded. Ground troops reported three VC captured, one radio, twelve gas masks and some medical supplies confiscated. On 10 January, 52 aircraft supported the 9th ARVN Division to include 33 armed transports, three armed platoons, and two C & C aircraft. In repositioning ground troops this day, 2,920 troops were carried by the armed transports. Ground action was light, but VC fire on helicopters approaching and departing pick-up zones was heavy. The armed platoons claimed one VC KBAA and two sampans destroyed. All maneuvering forces were extracted this day.

On 11 January, Delta Battalion supported with 23 aircraft, ten armed transports, two armed platoons and one C & C aircraft.

One mission was flown to emplace a battalion of 420 troops in ground blocking positions. Action was negligible. An amphibious assault carried the majority of the ground forces into action on this day.

On 12 January, this operation terminated. Support was twenty six aircraft to include 15 armed transports, two armed platoons and one C & C. One extraction of 80 troops was made. Negative results was reported by the ground troops.

In summary, 57 lifts were flown in support of the 9th ARVN Division moving 6,926 troops. The majority of the troops were moved during the first three days. The final two day portion of this operation was primarily an amphibious assault. During the course of this operation, outstanding coordination of helicopter operations and tactical air developed. On the third day when repositioning of troops within the operational area was in progress, helicopters were receiving heavy ground fires. Pre-planned tactical air, on station and armed with CBU, was called in to suppress in close support of the extraction. The strikes, directed by the aviation mission commander, covered flanks of the pick-up zone as well as approach and departure routes. Suppression was most effective.

5. TACTICS: During the reporting period the Delta VC have begun to change their tactics around pickup zones. Having habitually broken contact with ARVN forces during assaults, the VC continues, but have now started to infiltrate back to the pickup zones as the ARVN troops marshal for extraction. They avoid contact with troops on the ground, but upon the arrival of troop transports for pick-up, open fire from the tall grass in the paddies or the surrounding treelines. To counter this tactic, heavy suppressive fire by the escort aircraft and troop transports, coupled with TAC air strikes have been successfully used by the mission commanders. VNAF A1E's armed with 20mm or CBU are particularly useful because they can remain on station for long periods during extractions.

The Delta Battalion spot reporting system has entered its seventh month of existence. This intelligence net has processed over 1,400 reports and has been expanded to include the following units in addition to the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion.

- a. 73rd Aviation Company (OV-1)
- b. 156th Aviation Company (RRU)
- c. USAF "Spooky" Armed C-47
- d. USAF Tactical Aircraft
- e. 4th Air Commando Squadron
- f. 19th Psywar Company

g. VNAF A-1E Squadron

h. 4th platoon, 125th ATC Company

Other miscellaneous agencies furnish data whenever a significant sighting is made. This system has proven a distinct asset to the IV Corps collection effort. It is also proving to be a valuable source for the IV Corps DASC air strike targets. Sightings now average 11 per day.

From the spot report system a battalion target book has been generated. Utilizing all sources of information available to IV Corps plus the reports of pilots, positive locations of seven VC battalions have been made. Activity patterns developed from Target Book entries are showing clear pictures of VC targets, areas of interest and have given indications of intentions and/or objectives. Intelligence estimates based on analysis of Target Book postings have been averaging 75% in accuracy. As the raw data increases, this average should increase.

The Target Books are providing the S-2 the primary data base for the following studies being made:

a. Viet Cong Battalion Movement Patterns.

b. Sampan and Traffic Analysis.

c. Viet Cong Fortifications planning and Organization of Defensive and protective shelters/Fortifications.

6. VC ACTIVITY: Viet Cong activity was low at the beginning of November. By the end of November it had markedly increased and by mid-December the IV Corps area was approaching its normal high level of activity for that time of the year. In January activity dropped below the normal, however a decided change took place in the Delta late in the month with the attack by the VC of an ARVN battalion-size unit.

Major VC realignments have taken place in IV Corps. The Dong Thap I Regiment with its organic 261st & 263rd Main Force Battalions shifted to western Dinh Tuong sector and into Kien Hoa. Joining these units is the 267th Main Force Battalion of the long unreported Dong Thap II Regiment. This regiment has returned to the IV Corps area after an apparent absence of 22 months.

Indications are that the sudden buildup in Dinh Tuong may be in response to US 9th Infantry Division's move to My Tho.

7. TRAINING: Transition training of VNAF pilots in UH-1 helicopters continues. During this reporting period one class has completed training and another will do so within a week. A third class of eight is scheduled to commence the three month training period on 15 February.

Eight US Navy armed helicopter crews, to be employed in Game Warden-Market Time operations, arrived in the Delta for training in November. Because of a shortage of aircraft, the scheduled one month training period has been extended. The crews are attached to Assault Helicopter Companies to learn gun ship tactics and techniques, maintenance and gunnery.

SECTION II

Part I. OBSERVATIONS (Lessons Learned)

ITEM: Armed helicopters are particularly useful in the Delta in reconnaissance, security and fire support roles. Provisions for sufficient armed helicopters to permit decentralization of control to sector level would significantly improve the overall counterinsurgency effort in IV Corps.

DISCUSSION: Armed helicopters have enjoyed great success in supporting outposts or ARVN units under attack. The Ba Tri action described in paragraph 4,c,(1) is an example and illustrates well the importance of having the armed ships immediately available and responsive to the ground commander. Numbers of armed helicopters in IV Corps area are not sufficient however to permit further decentralization in terms of geography and control. In consequence there are many installations which cannot be supported by armed helicopters on a continuing basis. Further, there are insufficient armed ships to permit reasonable fulfillment of their capability for night armed reconnaissance and to support daylight offensive operations as well.

OBSERVATION: An increase in armed helicopter strength by one company would produce a most significant improvement in IV Corps counterinsurgency capability, even to the extent that consideration is being given to forfeiture of some troop lift capability (UH-1D's) for armed ships (UH-1B's).

ITEM: Visual reconnaissance by armed platoons

DISCUSSION: Low level reconnaissance (50-200 Feet) is commonly practiced. Reconnaissance at this level has been found to provide the best results in locating and identifying emplacements, personnel hiding under the overhang of tree lines, camouflaged sampans, and in distinguishing friend from foe in areas undergoing pacification. This is not to say however, that high reconnaissance (500-1000 feet) is not required. A high reconnaissance is usually performed prior to initiation of low reconnaissance to get an overview of the area of search. The more easily located targets are frequently spotted during these initial passes. More detailed search is then conducted at low altitude. Armed helicopters periodically return to the high reconnaissance during the course of the search to get a wider view and for reorientation. While the low reconnais-

ance gives a closer view, it is more fleeting. The area of search is also more restricted in the low level flight. In particular, trails across rice paddies are easier to detect at the higher altitudes.

OBSERVATION: Reconnaissance helicopters should employ both high (500-1000 feet) and low (50-200 feet) reconnaissance in Delta operations.

ITEM: Binding in Flight Controls of Troop Transports.

DISCUSSION: Excessive write-ups of binding controls developed during the monsoon season in the Delta. It was determined that the cause was lack of lubrication of the entire push-pull system. With frequent landings in rice paddies, in water up to the level of the cabin floor, lubrication was washed away, causing corrosion and binding.

OBSERVATION: Aircraft commanders should, whenever feasible, hold aircraft out of the water or at a skid-deep hover. If it is necessary to land in water a remark should be entered on the 2408-13 to alert maintenance. Measures can then be taken to purge and grease the controls.

ITEM: Ground-to-Air Communications.

DISCUSSION: This Battalion regularly and frequently stages operations involving 30 to 60 helicopters and up to 10 airplanes from pioneer-type airfields also in use by Air Force and civilian aircraft. In most cases the field can be readily reached only by air. At present the AN/PRC 25 radio (FM) is the only portable set available to the Army for air traffic control. It does not permit communications with Air Force and civilian aircraft (UHF and VHF), nor does it permit operation in the Army aviation command nets (UHF). The latter capability is necessary to proper support of the airmobile operations. Previous discussion of this item resulted in a proposed MTOE to provide necessary radios to assault helicopter companies. The equipment has not been received however and availability is unknown at this time.

OBSERVATION: Lightweight, portable UHF, and VHF radios, with power supply, are required for Combat Aviation Battalions, particularly in Vietnam.

ITEM: Aircraft Repair Parts.

DISCUSSION: The transportation of aircraft repair parts has been a continuing problem; especially for EDP parts. This is aggravated by the critical shortage of many parts and components. Since the limited assets of these items do not allow stockage below Direct Support Company level, each EDP demand must be passed to the Direct Support Company, in this case at Vung Tau, resulting in a large requirement for priority transportation. Service from "Freeloader," the cargo flight scheduled to deliver these parts, is erratic at best. Our units presently pick up most of their parts at Vung Tau using organic transports (UH-1D). Out-sized

parts must still await scheduled transportation. One set of UH-1D main rotor blades has been awaiting shipment at Vung Tau since 27 January. As of 1 February, it had not been delivered. These blades were requisitioned with an O2, EDP priority and are the only items outstanding on a down aircraft.

OBSERVATION: Responsive transportation for aircraft repair parts, primarily FDP items, would substantially improve unit combat readiness by minimizing EDP time and freeing for tactical missions those organic transports being used to pick up parts.

ITEM: Critical Shortage of Enlisted personnel in certain MOS.

DISCUSSION: Aircraft technical inspectors, avionics repairman, aircraft maintenance and supply personnel have reached critically low levels. Three factors appear to contribute to this shortage of skilled personnel.

First, the supply of school-trained personnel arriving in Vietnam is not presently sufficient to meet the increasing demand.

Second, qualified personnel have in the past been promoted out of their primary MOS or have been utilized in jobs that did not require the special skills for which they had been trained.

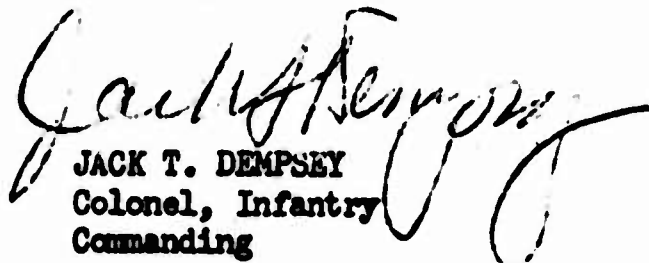
Third, to further complicate this matter, personnel assigned against valid requisitions have been diverted to other destinations at the replacement center. It is assumed that the receiving unit had a greater need than this Battalion.

OBSERVATION: Command emphasis has been placed on proper utilization of personnel to assist in alleviating the critical shortage of skilled personnel. Further assistance is needed.

Part II Recommendations:

1. Recommend an increase of one armed helicopter company (three platoons of eight aircraft each) for IV ARVN Corps area.
2. Recommend addition of portable UHF and VHF radios, with power supply, to TOE of assault helicopter companies in Vietnam.
3. Recommend that the inspection and lubrication intervals be accelerated on UH-1 type helicopters when working in rice paddy type conditions, with emphasis on flight control systems.

4. Recommend that supporting maintenance units be allocated sufficient scheduled transportation to eliminate the existing delays in shipping spare parts to the supported units. Any alternative system achieving more rapid delivery would be acceptable.


JACK T. DEMPSEY
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

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AVBA-C (15 Jan 67)

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SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned for Quarterly Period
Ending 31 January 1967. (RCS CSFOR-65) (U)

HEADQUARTERS, 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE, APO 96307

25 FEB 1967

TO: Department of the Army, Assistant Chief for Force Development,
Washington D. C. 20310

1. (U) This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report -
Lessons Learned for the period ending 31 January 1967 from Headquarters,
13th Combat Aviation (Delta) Battalion.

2. (C) Pertinent comments are as follows:

a. Reference section II, part 1, armed helicopters: An armed
helicopter company was programmed for IV CTZ, however this unit was
deleted by a recent decision of higher headquarters.

b. Reference section II, part 1, ground to air communications:
MTOE submissions by this headquarters include command communications
packages which will satisfy air-ground communications requirements when
they become available. This headquarters is evaluating the feasibility
of mounting VRC-46 (FM), VRC-24 (UHF), and ARC-73 (VHF) radios in jeeps
for use as mobile ATC towers. However, a shortage of qualified air
controller personnel to operate these mobile towers precludes an early
evaluation of this procedures.

c. Reference section II, part 1, aircraft repair parts:
Delivery of supplies should improve significantly with the movement of
the 611th TC Company to Vinh Long. This is programmed for approximately
15 March 1967.

d. Reference section II, part 1, critical shortage of enlisted
personnel in certain MOS's: Headquarters, USARV is presently conducting
a study to reallocate aircraft technical inspectors on a more equitable
basis.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

[Signature]
J. M. GREETHAM
Captain, AGC

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AVHCC-DH (14 Feb 67)

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the period ending
31 January 1967 (RCS CSFOR-65)

HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96307

17 MAR 1967

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-OT
APO 96558

1. This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the period ending 31 January 1967 from Headquarters, 13th Combat Aviation (Delta) Battalion as indorsed.

2. Pertinent comments are as follows:

a. Reference Item: Critical Shortage of EM in Certain MOS's, Part I, Section II, Page 9: Department of the Army has taken positive action to identify and/or to train qualified replacements for USARV in order to meet the increasing demand. When necessary, diversions have been made to maintain strengths of units in priority sequence. Specific comments follow:

(1) Helicopter Technical Inspector (MOS 67W). The 1st Aviation Brigade (including the 13th Aviation Battalion) is authorized twenty-one EM in MOS 67W; assigned strength is eighteen. The shortage of three is proportionately less than in other commands. Complete fill in this MOS, command-wide, is expected in July 1967.

(2) Avionics Repairman (MOS 35 series). USARV is experiencing a command-wide shortage of avionics repairmen. However, the command is expected to be at approximately 85 percent of authorized strength in this MOS by 31 May 1967.

(3) Aircraft Maintenance Personnel (MOS 67 series) and Supply Personnel (MOS 76 series). Coordination with Headquarters, 1st Aviation Brigade on 10 March 1967, revealed that a shortage of aircraft maintenance and supply personnel no longer exists within the 13th Aviation Battalion.

b. Reference 1st Item, Part I, Section II, Page 7; Paragraph 1, Part II, Section II, Page 9; and Paragraph 2a, 1st Indorsement: Concur. USARV recognizes the requirement for additional armed helicopter in the IV Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ). However, this requirement was deleted by DOD Program Four.

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HEADQUARTERS, 13TH AVIATION BATTALION

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AVHGC-DH (14 Feb 67)

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the period ending
31 January 1967 (RCS CSFOR-65)

c. Reference Item: Ground to Air Communication, Part 1, Section II, Page 8; Paragraph 2, Part II, Section II, Page 9; and Paragraph 2b, 1st Indorsement: Concur. Forty-four command communications packages have been approved by DA for development by USAECOM. In addition, the shortage of qualified air controllers will be somewhat alleviated by newly arrived AOD Teams; and by the addition of tower and GCA Controllers that will soon be provided under DA contract.

d. Reference Item: Aircraft Repair Parts, Part 1, Section II, Pages 8 and 9; Paragraph 4, Part II, Section II, Page 10; and Paragraph 2c, 1st Indorsement: Concur. The movement of the 611th Transportation Corps Company will be a significant improvement in the supply of aircraft repair parts. In addition, the problems with scheduling of cargo flight "Free-loader" have been solved. Regularly scheduled flights are now in operation and when cargo requirements exceed the capability of one aircraft additional backup aircraft are dispatched.

e. Reference Item: Binding in Flight Controls of Troop Transports, Part 1, Section II, Page 8; and Paragraph 3, Part II, Section II, Page 9: Concur. Information pertaining to lubrication and corrosion problems caused by frequent landings in rice paddies and necessary corrective actions to be taken will be disseminated by News Letters. News Letters are published by USAHV Aviation Safety Division, 1st Aviation Brigade and 34th General Support Group (ANAS).

FOR THE COMMANDER:

R. J. THORNTON
Lt. Col. AGC
Adjutant General

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